

China aims for 74.5 years life expectancy: minister

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In China, life expectancy should reach 74.5 years by 2015, Chinese Health Minister Chen Zhu said on Thursday.

"In truth, the goal even closer to my heart is 75 years," the minister told a press conference organised by the Franco-Chinese Foundation for Science and its Applications.

In 2009, life expectancy at birth in China was 73 years, according to the World Bank.

Chen, a hematology specialist who once practiced at a Paris hospital, said China aimed to improved its health system by 2015 to ensure "universal access to basic services".

Reforms have so far allowed for the setting up of a basic health insurance system, especially in the countryside, said the minister, adding that "10 years ago, farmers had nothing".

[Infant mortality](#) has also been dropping for the past three years and moves are afoot to establish a universal health insurance system, he said.

China has also decided to regulate the price of medicine and publish "a catalogue of essential drugs," he added.

Efforts in China to widen access to medical care and improve health insurance have made impressive headway, but 173 million Chinese still

face "catastrophic" [health expenses](#), according to research carried out by Chinese statisticians led by Sarah Barber in the World Health Organisation's Beijing office and recently published by the Lancet medical magazine.

The reforms were initiated in 2003 after liberalisation led to the introduction of medical fees and opened disparities between cities and the countryside, leaving many with spiralling [health costs](#) and worsening care.

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